

## **Chapter 4 – Why there Almost Certainly is No God**

At the conclusion of this chapter, Dawkins telling says:

*'If the argument of this chapter is accepted, the factual premise of religion – the God Hypothesis – is untenable. God almost certainly doesn't exist.'*<sup>1</sup>

If this is the case, then the content of the chapter is crucial to our understanding both of his argument, and of the weaknesses therein.

### **Summary of argument**

#### 1. The Ultimate Boeing 747

a. 'Creationists' have a tendency to invoke the argument that if something seems improbable, it can't just have happened, something must have caused it.

b. God is necessarily very complex

*'God is the ultimate Boeing 747'*<sup>2</sup>

c. Something must have caused God

d. Darwinianism, by contrast, provides the necessary information for life to have evolved.

#### 2. Natural Selection as a Consciousness-Raiser

a. Natural selection describes the process of 'lesser' things making 'greater' things.

b. It is an alternative to design

c. We observe complexity, and need a reason why

d. Natural selection is this reason

e. One needs to 'experience' science, not only know it

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<sup>1</sup> Dawkins, p158

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p114

*'But perhaps you need to be steeped in natural selection, immersed in it, swim about in it, before you can truly appreciate its power.'*<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Irreducible complexity

- a. God is a victim of infinite regress
- b. Natural selection possesses both workability and explanatory power
- c. There is a smooth slope to Mount Improbable
- d. God is too complex

*'However little we know about God, the one thing we can be sure of is that he would have to be very very complex, and presumably irreducibly so!'*<sup>4</sup>

- e. There is a pre-program that drives the process of Natural selection along its path – the reason it can progress is that it doesn't need to pull in information from elsewhere; it is already hard-wired into the universe

### 4. The worship of gaps

- a. Scientific progress is driven by the temporary lack of knowledge in a given area

*'It is utterly illogical to demand complete documentation of every step of any narrative, whether in evolution, or in any other science'*<sup>5</sup>

- b. Often, when Christians see a gap in scientific knowledge, they hurriedly push God in
- c. This is undermining of the scientific endeavour and anti-intellectual
- d. The gaps get filled in normal scientific progress, so God gets gradually pushed out.

### 5. The Anthropic Principle – planetary version

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p117

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p125

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p127

- a. The origin of life is very probable, due to a variety of 'Goldilocks' factors
- b. **But** it only had to happen once.
- c. We're here thinking about it
- d. It happened once.
- e. We're here because we're here because we're here.

#### 6. The Anthropic Principle – cosmological version

- a. There are certain parameters which need to be within very tight windows in order for our universe to work as we observe it<sup>6</sup>
- b. A God able to twiddle these knobs to be at the correct values would have to be unimaginably complex
- c. God doesn't exist
- d. We're here
- e. The universe's constants *are* as we observe them, so we're here, so the universe is as we observe it...
- f. The 'bouncing universe' description is a useful, if fatally flawed way of avoiding a universe with a beginning
- g. Physicists need to have their consciousness raised by biologists, as the universe at large may undergo natural selection.

*'Maybe the psychological reason for this amazing blindness has something to do with the fact that many people have not had their consciousness raised, as biologists have, by natural selection and its power to tame improbability.'*<sup>7</sup>

#### Pros and Cons

- Pros:
  - Proves that a creator would be more complex than His creation!
  - Helpful reminder not to cram God into gaps in our understanding, and thus scupper the scientific endeavour – this is naïve, and exhibits bad theology and bad science!

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<sup>6</sup> Six, according to Martin Rees

<sup>7</sup> Dawkins, p143

*'Do not just declare things to be irreducibly complex; the chances are that you haven't looked carefully enough at the details, or thought carefully enough about them!'*<sup>8</sup>

- Cons:
  - 'Infinite Regress' is just a grown-up version of 'who made God?' from any playground!
  - Darwinianism is self-proving (an irrefutable argument) – same accusation as he makes against religion!<sup>9</sup>
  - Dawkins applies the mechanism of **creation** to the **creator**
  - He sees Natural Selection as a purposeful agent – the lesser things are responsible for making the greater things<sup>10</sup> - not only is this counter-intuitive, it's also contrary to the laws of thermodynamics!
  - Whilst Natural Selection may have internal explanatory power, it does not explain why it can explain in the first place – why is the universe inherently logical and reasonable?
  - Large creation events need a powerful creator – Dawkins does not allow for the fact that an infinitely powerful creator God would not be challenged by processes that we humans see as insurmountable<sup>11</sup>
  - If the information necessary for Natural Selection is already pre-programmed into the universe ... where does this pre-programme come from?
  - The Anthropic principle doesn't explain anything – it only states the fact we're here in an overly complex and circular way. We don't gain any new information from it. It doesn't explain *why* we're here, just states *that* we're here<sup>12</sup>
  - Dawkins does some serious abuse to the field of exoplanets – it pains me greatly!
  - *'The theory of natural selection is genuinely simple. So is the origin from which it starts. That which it explains, on the other hand, is complex almost beyond telling; more complex than anything we can imagine, save a God capable of designing it.'*<sup>13</sup> → Assumption that natural selection is a science of origins, rather than of continuings.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p124

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p114

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p117

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p122

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p136

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p151

